

Key Steps in the Interview Process

Step 1: Preparation

Preparation for the interview includes:

- Reviewing all available information about the applicant. It often helps to have the applicant fill out an application ahead of time.
- Reviewing all pertinent information on the organization and volunteer positions. It is important to understand and design questions :
- Skills needed to perform the task/role:
- Knowledge and information needed:
- Attitudes needed for healthy and successful performance of the position
- Formulating questions to bring out the desired information you need to screen for suitability for the position(s).
- Scheduling adequate time (generally one half hour) and a comfortable, private place for interviewing.
- Casting aside your other work and distractions, and asking for your calls to be held.

Step 2: Opening/Greeting

Opening the interview includes:

- Putting the applicant at ease (warm greeting, introductions, establishing rapport).
- Clarifying the purpose of the interview.
- Establishing time-frame for the interview.

Step 3: Body of the Interview

- If the interviewee is not familiar with your organization, you may wish to give some overview at the beginning of the interview. Otherwise, you may wish to begin the interview with questions that access information about the person's hobbies, interests, past jobs, motivators, dislikes, etc.
- If you have several applicants for the same position, be sure to ask each of them the core questions you have developed, so that you have comparative information with which to make your selection later.
- After getting a clear picture of the applicant (and assuming you wish to move forward), selectively share information about the possible volunteer positions for which he/she might be suitable. (If you conduct the interview in the reverse order, prospective volunteers may simply tell you what they think you want to hear in order to get an available position.)
- As you focus in on which position this applicant is likely to be suited for, give all the necessary information: position requirements, hours of service, place and conditions of work, training needed, purchase of uniform (if required), opportunities offered, supervision to be expected, etc.
- Be careful to explain the full requirements of the job; a common mistake is for interviewers to undersell the job or its requirements. You may want to offer an opportunity for the volunteer to observe the activity before committing to it.
- Take time to answer the applicant's questions.
- The prospective volunteer may offer an unexpected skill or talent, or have an idea for contributing time to the organization in a way that has not previously been considered. It is important to listen for what a volunteer might bring to the organization that might become formalized into a new volunteer position. Ultimately the proposed idea and the organization's need for that skill must be fully explored. It may involve having a second interview with the potential volunteer to fully determine mutual interests in developing a new volunteer position.

Step 4: The Closing

The closing should be concise and upbeat. First review and summarize where you have been in your interview, and then share what the next steps will be.

When the applicant is acceptable

This is easy. The important thing is to be certain that the final choice is wholeheartedly the applicant's. Have you gently urged the applicant to accept your own decision? If there is agreement, be sure the applicant knows when and where to go for discussion and determination of the specific assignment.

When the applicant is unacceptable

- Rejection is not easy at any time, particularly when the would-be applicant is eager to be of help. When the interviewer has reached a decision that the applicant is unqualified for the position in question or for other service in the organization, the interview should be terminated as rapidly as possible, with graciousness and tact.
- If the applicant has skills or experience which may qualify him/her for volunteer positions with other agencies in the community, make the referral and, for courtesy sake, call the recommended agency to let them know.
- Often an inappropriate applicant will verbalize his/her disinterest in the position, in which case you can agree that it does not sound like a "match." But if the person seems to want the position, you must, in a carefully impersonalized discussion, show the applicant that this is unsuitable for both the individual and the organization. Subterfuges, such as invoking a waiting list or mentioning vague future dates for contact, disappoint, annoy, and can make enemies unnecessarily.
- Regardless of the outcome of the interview, in closing thank the person for his/her time and interest in your organization.